

Propaganda

Gothic Chronicle
No. 22



Cocteau Twins • Lost Souls • Night's Children

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PROPAGANDA MAGAZINE

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New Hyde Park, NY. 11040 USA

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COCTEAU TWINS

the demons within

Liz Fraser reveals all to Stephanie Young



P. Levy

Liz Fraser of the Cocteau Twins purges her soul on **FOUR-CALENDAR CAFE**.

It has been called "the voice of God" and the "sound of heaven itself." From no quarter of the cosmos echoes a more angelic sound. The music created by the Cocteau Twins has for twelve years been the defining statement on what is ethereal and eternal in pop culture. Strangely however, what for most is a deeply serene and beautiful sound, is for its creators a by-product of self-torment and self-doubt.

It appears that for the past dozen or so years, the members of the band were using the enigmatic quality of their music to shield themselves from the prying scrutiny of the press and public. They were hiding behind the renowned aloof mystique they had built up around themselves. For the first time since the band formed in 1982, lead singer/lyricist Liz Fraser is commenting on this seemingly bizarre dichotomy between the music of the Cocteau Twins and their state of mind.

"I think people who listen to our music get something completely different out of it than what we put in," says Liz. "I've heard that most people feel it has a calming influence, an almost tranquilizing effect... which is strange because we pour a lot of anguish and aggression into our music."

The band has recently released their seventh album, **FOUR-CALENDAR CAFE** on Capitol Records. Though the familiar Cocteau sound remains essentially intact with its cascading guitars and angelic vocals, there is a true departure in Liz's lyrical style. For the first time since the band's debut album **GARLANDS**, she sings in clearly discernible English. Over the past decade, the Cocteau Twins have built up an almost cultlike reputation based on the fact that Liz created her own undecipherable language of nonsensical

syllables. The songs did not have lyrics in the conventional sense. Liz created her own little revolution with a completely new dialect. She used her voice as an additional instrumental apparatus rather than simply a mouth-piece to convey ideas. From such now classic albums as **HEAD OVER HEELS** ('83) to **TREASURE** ('84) to **VICTORIALAND** ('86), Liz procured an entirely new frame of reference. It truly was as if the angels above could be recorded and played back for mere mortals. As it turns out, however, Liz was not simply making a creative statement, she was using this vocal style as a veil of secrecy to hide her intense torment and absence of self-esteem.

"I used the music to escape into, to withdraw from the hurtful reality of my life," reveals Liz. "It was almost like the way a drug addict uses drugs—to blur out reality. Whereas Robin [Guthrie, Liz's husband and Cocteau's guitarist] was actually using drugs, I was using my songs as an escape. They had no relation to the world outside my head. Though that way of writing lyrics is very comfortable and insular, it wasn't helping me deal with my problems."

"I was sexually abused as a child on several occasions. Large segments of that period in my life had been repressed until recently. The trauma of those incidents forced me to withdraw within myself. I lost my right to be a child. I lost the rights over my own body. Do you know how devastating that is to the psyche? When Robin and I first started writing music together, I was only sixteen. I used my writing as a defense mechanism and never even realized it. Now I need to write meaningful lyrics, clearly understandable lyrics, because I need to use them as a therapeutic tool. Our music is the most important thing in my life outside Lucy [her young daughter] and Robin."

On **FOUR-CALENDAR CAFE**, this unusual therapy Liz is using

to exorcise her demons manifests itself quite clearly in songs like "Evangeline" and "Thelma and Wandering Around Lost." In these selections we discover the pain Liz is only now releasing. ("My body's my own / Is this what my body says? / There is no going back / I'm not the same / I'm growing up again / I had to fantasize to survive.") It seems Robin has also exorcised some demons of his own. Since the depths of the group's collective depression back in 1990 while touring for the **HEAVEN OR LAS VEGAS** LP (the one just prior to **FOUR-CALENDAR CAFE**), he has been drug free. But as with Liz, the struggle to remain on track is on-going.

Indeed, the Cocteau Twins have been reborn. They are armed with a new optimism and a resurgent enthusiasm. The heavyhanded control of the 4AD label has also been lifted. The band felt the label wanted too much input. They acknowledge that this creative control did in fact help mold them as a young band, but they feel the need for such a thing had outlived its usefulness a few years ago and had actually become a hindrance.

"4AD has always been involved very heavily in artist development... which is a good thing when you're just starting out," states Liz. "But we have our own plan of action now. When we first signed with 4AD back in '82, Ivo [Watts-Russell, the label's founder] was like a mentor / father-figure to us. We were still only teenagers and his guidance helped us immensely. Now 4AD is some big corporate entity, and we sensed their loss of enthusiasm with what we wanted to do. We weren't playing their game. The recording of our last two albums for them [**BLUE BELL KNOLL** in '88 and **HEAVEN OR LAS VEGAS** in '90] became big battles. We finally had enough and went somewhere we felt would give us more creative freedom. Fontana [their U.K. label] and Capitol [U.S. label] have been just great - very supportive."

Another major factor in giving Liz and Robin the peace of mind they've needed for so long is the sense of family they've acquired since the birth of their daughter, Lucy Bell. Liz describes mother-

hood as the most valuable learning experience anyone could ever have.

"Being parents has forced us to be more responsible in our lives," confesses Liz, "because whatever we do, not only affects us, but also affects Lucy. She's at the stage now [five years old] where she's constantly asking questions and constantly yearning for knowledge. Not only has this taught me to try to set a proper example for her, it has also taught me to constantly keep asking questions myself. The growing process should never stop. In this sense, my song writing has definitely matured. I no longer use music to hide behind — instead, I use it to expand my scope of experiences. Through my music, I can grow."

This growing process is quite evident on **FOUR-CALENDAR CAFE**. Even the titles of the songs suggest Ms. Fraser's much heralded new awakening. "Know Who You Are At Every Age" is about just what the title suggests. In this piece, Liz poetically reiterates her thirst for self growth and exploration. In "My Truth" she comes to terms with whatever may have faced her in the past. She bravely lets the chips fall where they may. She expresses the desire to turn all negatives into positives, and to use adversity as a driving force rather than allowing it to become an obstacle.

The Cocteau Twins have used this new-found confidence to their advantage. They recently finished a world-wide tour that included four back-up musicians in addition to the regular line-up of Liz, Robin and Simon Raymonde. **FOUR-CALENDAR CAFE** has also become the band's most successful LP to date. They're not only getting a lot of air time on MTV, but they have also had several appearances on network television, including the Tonight Show with Jay Leno.

It's been a long and bumpy road since Liz and Robin, two idealistic teenagers, left the grimy, industrial Scottish town of Grange-mouth to seek fame and fortune in London's postpunk music scene... but it seems they've finally reached their heaven.

No demons up there.

END



The music they make seems to come from heaven itself.

JOHN KOVIK'S SUB VERSION



The first thought that comes to mind when listening to DAMAGED GODS, the new 6-song cassette by John Koviak's Sub Version, is that the Gods must be very angry. This pounding, post-industrial, apocalyptic recording conveys a chilling sense of urgency and impending doom. As with his first Sub Version release, METAMORPHOSIS, John Koviak again demonstrates one man's mastery over his machines. The result is a techno-conflagration of monumental proportions.

"Technology and music go very naturally together," says John about his aural creations. "The more you explore with machines, the more you find: it's limitless. There is definitely something intensely spiritual about not having any boundaries."

And those boundaries are pushed to their limits with such powerful selections as "Prayer," "Tragic Bride" and "Psycho-kryste." Along with the electronic instrumentation, John adds his deep, guttural vocals which resonate in the listener's head like a jackhammer. The lyrics are biting and well-conceived.

"I don't limit my writing to any one topic," explains John. "I'll cover anything from grim reality to politics to more personal stuff like love and despair. An artist of any kind should involve every aspect of their being in their creation — life experiences, fears, dreams, heritage, politics. As far as the music itself goes, I try to be as eclectic as possible. Classical music in particular though has had a definite influence."

Inevitably, Sub Version was destined to be a solo project considering the dissatisfaction John experienced with earlier collaborative efforts. With SV, he can allow for the flow of a more pure form of self-expression, unencumbered by the clash of egos.

"I certainly realize the power that can be generated by individuals working together under a common vision," states John. "Perhaps this small dilemma is a mirrored metaphor for the greater problem of uncohesiveness in our society. We're so fragmented and bombarded daily by the sinister forces behind the media, that we have forgotten how to recognize our true companions from our true enemies. 'Truth' has become a subversive virus relentlessly hunted down for termination." John hopes his Sub Version can provide that small beacon of truth in the sea of disinformation and outright lies. In a decaying society, there is a definite need for those individuals who have the will and the strength to swim against the tide and expose the sacred cows and the prevailing hypocrisies.

"We've been crippled by self-inflicted collective guilt and pity," explains John. "It rules all our actions. We live our lives on our knees catering to the weak and condemning the strong. There's a sickness of the heart and of the mind in this society."

John realizes that the mainstream media and powers that be in the recording industry will never feel comfortable giving messages like his mass exposure. Actually, he doesn't even want their attention.

"There's an interesting analogy that can be applied to almost every aspect of life," concludes John. "It's quantity vs. quality. You can't have both. My hope would be to have a small but dedicated and like-minded audience instead of a large and indifferent one."

Finding Sub Version's niche within the music scene can prove to be elusive. Normally, you'd automatically brand something with an industrial bent as cold or machine-like. However, John has managed to breathe life and passion into his sound. His machines have a certain human quality about them. Where does John see the alternative music scene as a whole going in the near future?

"Right now, it's in a confused, regressive state," he says. "There was a time, not too long ago, when an artist could remain submerged in his fantasies; it was much more creative then. But now, we've been cruelly ripped from our dreams to face the questions of our age, once and for all. Perhaps the dreaming will return some day." Amen. As for the future of Sub Version itself, John has tentatively scheduled a CD release for sometime in the spring of '95. As with his other releases, expect the unexpected.

— ARTICLE BY ANNE KONNOR

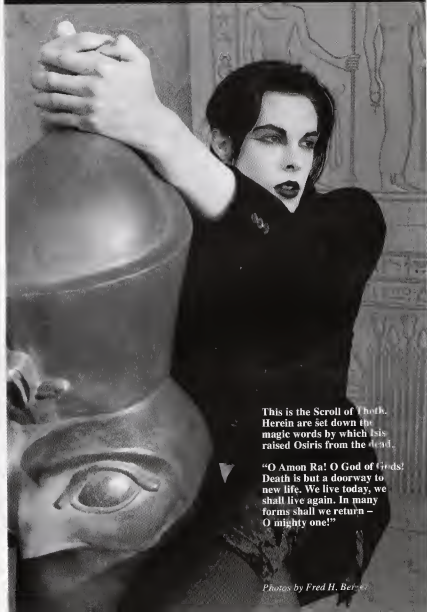
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John Koviak appears in the new Propaganda video, "The Ritual," in the role of a Black Adept of Tibetan Buddhism. See page 34 for the video review.



"Come into our world, where men are gods." — Psycho-kryste.

THE SCROLL OF THOTH



This is the Scroll of Thoth.
Herein are set down the
magic words by which Isis
raised Osiris from the dead.

“O Amon Ra! O God of Gods!
Death is but a doorway to
new life. We live today, we
shall live again. In many
forms shall we return –
O mighty one!”

Photos by Fred H. Be...



sun and moon



"All life on Earth participates in
the dance of Moon and Sun.
And we, engendered in the oceans,
feel in our blood the pull of
our Moon upon the tides.
We are sunlight transformed by
trees into fruit and plasm, and we
are so intimately of the Earth that

our collective dream is paradise.
Thus we are moved to celebrate
the ceaseless play of the seasons
and to ensoul ourselves,
landscape and heaven."

Poem by Frederick Adams from
THE PAGAN, Issue No. 1, Nov. 1970

"If I beheld the sun when it shined, or the moon walking in bright-
ness; and my heart hath been secretly enticed, or my mouth hath
kissed my hand: this also were an iniquity to be punished by the
judge: for I should have denied the God that is above."

- JOB, XXXI, 26-28



Photography by Fred H. Berger Modelling by Christopher and "Luna"



"Sweet Nothing"

THE LOST AND FOUND

BY FRED H. BERGER & JON VON FAUST

A 15-year-old boy named Nothing, his smooth ageless face darkened by hanging tassels of dyed black hair and a world-weariness far beyond his tender years - his is the face of melancholy, the face of **LOST SOULS**. Such is the countenance which peers with eyes of the deepest blue from the front cover of Poppy Z. Brite's debut novel, her supernatural tale of youthful alienation, of the yearning for love and belonging, and of the rites of passage. Lying in the nude on top of bedsheets beneath phosphorescent stars painted on the bedroom ceiling, this strange and lonely lad finds comfort in the sucking of blood from his own wrist. He reads **William S. Burroughs**, listens to **Bauhaus**, and gets head from a classmate who models himself after **The Cure's Robert Smith** - obviously these are not the traits of a well-adjusted teenager. And with the conformist demands of home and school closing in on him,

Nothing takes flight on the highways of the American south in search of self and the blood-crazed brood from whence he sprang.

And then there is **Ghost**, the sensitive musician and clairvoyant, dazzling in his blond pallor, his limpid azure eyes windows to a world beyond the living. "Who was born and murdered and resurrected inside that skull," wonders his best friend and bandmate Steve. Communing with the spirits of the dead and burning with empathy for the wayworn young traveler, **Ghost's** dream of the twins holds the key to the mystery of **Nothing's** quest. As he related the vision to Steve - "They went to New Orleans. Artists put them in films. They were twins, and the hip crowd loved the perversity of that. Their mirror-image pornography was art. They were Donatello Davids, skinny and beautiful, not heavysset like Michelangelo's. Androgynous striplings who outlined each other's bones in lipstick." What could our young writer have been thinking of - **Gene Loves Jezebel**

perhaps, those twin pillars of comfort and support for a teen outcast adrift in the suburban wasteland of Chapel Hill, North Carolina. It is not by chance that Nothing resides in the same hostile environment, burdened by many of the same deviant proclivities, and clinging to the jujitsu of beat poets and goth bands in much the same way that Poppy did. He is in effect her alter ego, and much more; he is the epitome of her erotic ideal, "the pale, skinny, smooth-skinned, sharpboned boy" burning with desire for similarly beautiful and uninhibited youths.

LOST SOULS is replete with a lurid homoeroticism - picture a waifish gothic boy seduced at a death-rock club by a blooddrinker named Christian who jacks him off as the life is drained away, or three naked nosferatus joined together by a single steel ring which pierces their erect cocks, and all this to the strains of "Ziggy Stardust" and "Bela Lugosi Is Dead." The eros which binds this all-male vampire coven also serves to initiate Nothing into their unholy brotherhood, their ever-lasting family beyond the reach of Bible-punchers, rednecks, and the law. Desire in the presence of death - it is the stuff of wet dreams in black lace and charnel house dust. But there is a guiding spirit in all of this, a light at the end of the catacombs, the light of self-discovery and acceptance shining in Ghost's pensive gaze.

With her extensive knowledge of the southern death-rock scene and the sensitivity which comes from having lived most of her 26 years on society's tattered fringe, Poppy was able to infuse her story with an authenticity and intimacy unknown in other vampire literature which attempts to depict underground youth culture (e.g. THE VAMPIRE LESTAT). Although greatly influenced by the Anne Rice-induced vampiric love affair with New Orleans, even to the point of relocating herself to that "city of enchantment," the author has managed to develop a very different mythology. In Poppy's dark and fantastic universe the fanged ones are nocturnal by choice, not necessity; and they Do! "drink wine" - or at least Chartreuse, that luminous green liqueur of the Mardi Gras which the pretty-boy vamps of LOST SOULS gulp down like soda pop. Nor do they adhere to the traditional vampire's abstinence from food and sex; in fact they are addicted to sweets and constantly in heat, devouring only slightly more candy than come. Impervious to tooth-decay and sexually transmitted diseases, they drown themselves in gluttony and lechery - call it 'vampire liberation.'

Poppy's infatuation with the mysterious and the forbidden continues with her latest novel, DRAWING BLOOD. It is a tale of ghosts and spirit possession likewise set within the haunted precincts of 'The Big Easy' and Missing Mile, North Carolina, the heartland of LOST SOULS. Here too the central characters are ravishing young men who alternately find and lose themselves in homosexual relations with one another. In this case the one who escapes via the mystical asphalt ribbon of the great American highway is Zachary Bosch, 19-year-old computer hacker and fabulous androgyn whose naturally blue-black hair and translucent skin make him the envy of French Quarter deathrockers. And of course his eyes are emerald green (any relation to Louis Pointe du Lac of THE VAMPIRE CHRONICLES?) - after all, what better genetic code could a gothic vampirephile wish for. And as if this were not a sufficiently exalted pedigree, he is endowed with a truly remarkable lineage descending from the 15th century Dutch painter and occultist Hieronymus Bosch.

Only briefly interrupted by a lascivious frolic with a boy working at a late-night convenience store, Zach's flight from federal authorities takes him from New Orleans to Missing Mile, that psychic crucible created in the imagination of the writer and placed smack in the middle of the Bible Belt. And it is here where the fugitive, like Nothing before him, must confront his personal demons and find his destiny. It is a place that is not so much a point on the map as it is a state of mind, and to this shabby, kudzu-shrouded rural dreamscape yet another pilgrim is drawn. He is Trevor McGee, a 25-year-old artist and sole survivor of a family massacre when he was only 5 and living in an old house on the outskirts of town. Twenty years had passed since his father had bludgeoned his mother and baby brother to death and then committed suicide, twenty years since he had set foot in the Carolinas; and now the time had finally come to seek an answer and make his peace, but with whom - or what?

In the moldering wreck of what he once called home, Trevor would meet Zach, two strangers brought together by fate, each in dire need of the other; and they would connect with such ferocious intensity that, for all its evil, not even the house could tear them apart. This gifted illustrator of underground comics, this entirely too beautiful flaxen-haired Adonis, was by Zach's reckoning an amazing find; but, in the words of William S. Burroughs, it was the "algebra of need" so pain-

fully written in the elegant lines of Trevor's face that caused one cynical cyberpunk anarchist to open his heart for the first time in his life. And although pleasuring one another for days on end, covered in body fluids and reeking of sex, their relationship retains an astonishing degree of dignity and compassion. However, there is also the element of profound danger, and in a most bizarre and frightening way, the spirit of the house uses the spector of AIDS to terrorize the lovers. Undoubtedly, in spite of all her

maximum extent, exposing themselves to all the perils of such a lifestyle - or deathstyle if you prefer. And yet, despite the recklessness of it all, there is something of value to be gained by which both Zach and Trevor are made whole, but their situation is left open-ended and without guarantees.

This not only fulfills the romantic requirements of a haunted counter-culture love story, but there is a certain truthfulness to it born of the author's close psychological proximity to her subject

liberationist ardor. Poppy is unafraid to face the awful truth of wanton sex in the gay '90s. With as many as one-half of American gay men now infected with HIV, and with over 200,000 of them dead before their time, it is indeed unfortunate that these two exquisite desperados are not immortal vampires - their occasional consumption of one another's blood notwithstanding. Being loath to exercise caution of any kind, they push the envelope of risk to its

matter. Believing in the spirit realm and the alternative music scene, she is also convinced that she is a 'gay boy' who happens to have been born in a woman's body - hence her strong preference for such characters in her novels and in her life. Presently she is involved and living with two 'omnisexual' male lovers and has starred in an erotic art film, "John Five," in which she appears naked with a pair of 18-year-old youths, and while fearful of

"Ghost-child"

AIDS views safe sex as a kind of living death. It is therefore no wonder that *LOST SOULS* and *DRAWING BLOOD* should have been developed as idealized yet troubled depictions of gay life, where the fairies are all gorgeous, almost ethereal creatures, and the gay-bashers/vampire-killers are Coors-drinking Neanderthals and twisted Christian fundamentalists. It is a stark us-vs.-them world-view forged in the fires of her queer/goth subculture experience.

But what is it then, from the viewpoint of the impartial observer, that grants Poppy's heroes - druggies, outlaws, and blood-drinkers alike - the right to pursue wasteful and destructive lives and yet be worthy not only of tolerance, but respect and admiration. Is it the Zeitgeist embracing the cult of victimhood which compels us to feel with acute sensitivity the anguish of Nothing and Trevor as they cut their wrists with razor blades - a bad habit they picked up from Poppy's own suicidal phase, when she would go to school with blood smeared around her eyes and scars that everyone said she'd regret, but never did. Or is it the author's patron deity, the vampire goddess Kali, who infects us with the desire to join Trevor in lapping up the blood and semen from Zach's mouth after punching his beloved senseless and then forcing his rude sex past the boy's battered lips.

Surely, there are powerful forces at work here whereby Poppy's prodigal sons are made the objects of unconditional love and affection. Perhaps in the case of the playful Nothing and the predatory Zach, it is the fact that they are so heart-breakingly young which encourages the reader to suspend judgment and attribute their waywardness to raging adolescent hormones and the need to fend for themselves at an early age. As for Ghost and Trevor, who lose their virginity in the course of Poppy's fantasies, there is an almost saintly, altruistic quality to their love-making, born not of boredom or lust but of the deepest empathy and the sincerest desire to heal and thereby be healed. Thus beatified, their endearment in the hearts and minds of the readership is virtually assured. And wouldn't it almost be a sin in itself not to forgive these long-suffering, weeping beauties with their sad eyes veiled by luxuriant tresses, and their silken alabaster skin as pure as the driven snow. Who can deny earth angels such as these, no matter what wrongs they've done. It is Poppy Z. Brite's powerful new mythos which sways us so.

Haunted houses and vampires aside, *LOST*

SOULS and *DRAWING BLOOD* are essentially love stories untethered by the puritanical mores of Judeo-Christianity, where boy-to-boy coupling is holy communion and where marijuana and magic mushrooms are the daily bread. It is the world of the patriarchs turned on its head, an act of Luciferic sedition which Poppy commits in her first novel through manifestations of paternal incest, and in her second through the murder spree of Trevor's dad and a reference to the capacity of the sire to slaughter his offspring; "not even in the womb are children safe from their fathers." Nor are they safe from the lyrical and seductive prose of Ms. Brite's provocative and compelling brand of gothic story-telling; poor babes, they haven't a Ghost of a chance. ☠



Poppy Z. Brite

Having begun her career as a much-maligned publisher of an underground high school newspaper, "The Glass Goblin," Poppy Z. Brite has advanced to the head of the class in the new literary genre of erotic horror. A collection of the author's short stories is published in *SWAMP* FOETUS from Borderlands Press, and Harper Prism has recently released *LOVE IN VEIN*, an anthology of 20 stories of erotic vampirism edited and introduced by Poppy Z. Brite.

KIDS IN CLUBLAND

Denizens of the "vampire realm" at the immortal Helter Skelter.

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TEXT AND PHOTOS BY FRED H. BERGER



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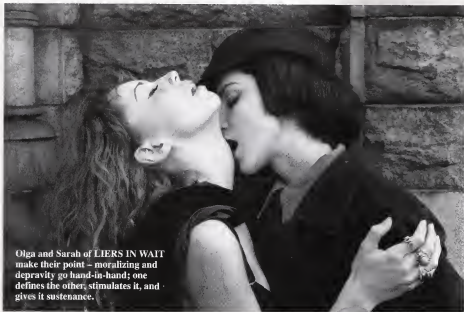
Then the liberated Old Ones would teach them new ways to shoot and kill and revel and enjoy themselves, and all the earth would flame with a holocaust of ecstasy and freedom.

*The Call of Cthulhu,
by H.P. Lovecraft*

Do not be fooled by the tranquility of a light breeze by which the trees sway gently to and fro, for who can say what incubi and succubi are thus carried to your bedside. Of this I know well, for as I lay upon my pillow in the wee hours of Atlanta's late summer nocturne, the house guest of a macabre quintet known as LIERS IN WAIT, my dreams were invaded by a stifling atmosphere that caused me to gag and choke. Tormented thus was my sleep until, struggling like a drowning man, or one who had been buried alive, I came awake panting and trembling. Thoroughly disoriented was I, as my head was where my feet had been when I first dozed off only a few minutes earlier, and having no recollection of this complete reversal of position I

began to entertain thoughts of the supernatural. It felt as though my skull had been in a vice, and my tongue was so dry that it fairly cleaved to the roof of my mouth. And like a child frightened of the dark, I turned on the reading lamp mounted above the headboard. The sheer black drapes of the bed canopy took on the morbid aspect of a funeral shroud through which my gaze fixed upon the placid countenance of Isis' graven image, an ebony bust situated on the dresser across the room. And then the shadows of her exquisite and delicate features did seem to shift as if the lamp was being turned by an unseen hand.

My mind, which was unimpaired and quite sober, was immediately thereafter seized by vivid impressions of angels, the mysterious Watchers of the Apocryphal **Books of Enoch**, walking amongst the inhabitants of the land of Sumer in the farthest reaches of antiquity. For it was here that the Celestials did impart to mankind, in defiance of a divine edict, the dark gifts of astrology and sorcery. Next I beheld the "sons of God," as they are called in **Genesis 6:4**, making passionate love to beautiful nubile girls with long luxuriant hair, their naked bodies on fire with the seed of the immortals - and



Olga and Sarah of LIERS IN WAIT make their point - moralizing and depravity go hand-in-hand; one defines the other, stimulates it, and gives it sustenance.

thus was begotten the savage and magical race of giants known in the Hebrew as "the Nephilim."

And, anon, my conscious awareness was inundated by a racial memory of the Deluge, and I envisioned the overwhelming sorrow and torment of the gods of Sumer as their reign of chaos over a depraved humanity was swept away in the tidal surge. And like the vast bulk of life and substance upon the earth in those days, their children, those untamed Titans of old, were submerged in the raging floodwaters. After an eon in which these giants devoured all living things, including each other, drinking blood and casting spells, their corporeal existence had been dashed against the rocky shores of extinction. Yet, the angelic part of their being caused the Nephilim to live on as disembodied spirits to wreak havoc and misery upon each succeeding generation of the post-Flood era.

As for the fathers of this monstrous brood, they were imprisoned in the mountains and deserts of the earth, for great was the transgression of revealing to mere mortals the secret knowledge of magic by which God himself derives his awesome powers of creation and destruction. And greater still was the sin of immaculate angels defiling themselves through sexual union with "the daughters of men." I saw Azazel, the leader of the rebel band, cast down into sepulchral depths and buried beneath a heap of boulders at the foot of the cliff of Haradan in the Sinai desert. And there he remains, aware of all that is happening in the world above, longing for freedom and vengeance, but powerless to rise up from his tomb. He is "dead but dreaming" in the words of H.P. Lovecraft, who in his *Necronomicon* mythos describes a similar demonic clique of cosmic outlaws who came to our world in prehistoric times and instructed early man in magical rites and worship so that he might pay homage to them. And they suffered virtually the same fate when a global cataclysm plunged their earthly citadel of R'lyeh to the bottom of the sea, where they have lain dormant for ages. However, despite the death-like repose of the old gods, they maintain psychic communion with certain groups and individuals dedicated to the preservation of their primeval cult.

Caught up in this arcane reverie I rose from the bed and made my way to the bathroom for a drink, and as the cool waters spilled over my parched lips there came from behind me a sudden and startling cacophony of banging sounds. I turned from the sink, and

saw that several bottles of shampoo and hair dye had fallen from a shelf into the bath tub - but there had been no tremor, no wind, no physical manifestation of any kind that might have disturbed the stillness that laid heavily upon the house. Cautiously I made my way into the living room where LIERS IN WAIT's Olga, "the Keeper of the Keys," slumbered blissfully with the black-hearted Erik, "Master of the Six Metal Strings." I wished to awaken them, but at the moment of my hesitation to do so, I fell under the spell of two H.R. Giger paintings hanging on the wall, and I thought to myself, "from what hidden source of inspiration does this man summon his dark visions of creatures and artifacts so alien and worn with time, so dead yet somehow alive."

And then I knew that Azazel and the Watchers were the same as Cthulhu and the "Great Old Ones" of the *Necronomicon*, and that they were the dream-senders who use the hands of the artist to "keep alive the memory of the ancient ways and shadow forth the prophecy of their return" as explained in Lovecraft's *The Call of Cthulhu*. The "glorious resurrection" foretold in the Mythos is to be aided and abetted by human acolytes whose sign is the five-pointed star. It is said that this amulet is the only protection against the deadly fields of discordant energy which emanate from these extradimensional beings who are the very essence of the Primal Chaos. And with a sense of apprehension I then gazed down upon my recumbent hosts, upon Erik's pentacle tatoo, and realized that I was in the midst of "the Servants of the Gods" and that LIERS IN WAIT are to music what Giger is to art and Lovecraft is to literature. Observing Olga's rapid-eye-movement I imagined the tempestuous visions lurking behind her serene archaic beauty, visions of an imminent New Age of gods and giants, magic and monsters - "The Empire Revived." And me, at the mercy of flaming telepaths without the protection of a scarab or a Cross, or the prescribed pentacle, just a tattered old Bible secreted away in my suitcase. Alas, come what may...

*Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea!
For the devil is come down unto you, having great
wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short
time.*

Revelation 12:12

For more information contact LIERS IN WAIT,
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By what words does one claim
Elyah's precious key, and unlock
the inscrutable heart of the divine?



The Masque of the Red Death



TEXT AND PHOTOS BY FRED H. BERGER

"The Red Death had long devastated the country. No pestilence had ever been so fatal or so hideous. Blood was its Avatar and its seal - the redness and the horror of blood."

Could this be a reference to the plague brought on by divine wrath in the **Book of Exodus** (chapter 7, verses 19 to 21) whereby all the waters of Egypt were turned to blood, or is it a grim commentary on the merciless march of the AIDS pandemic through the open veins of a proud and dissolute humanity. It is neither, and yet it is both - it is Edgar Allan Poe's **Masque Of The Red Death**, that doom-laden allegory of man's foolish vanity in the face of a certain and monstrous end. Although set in the 16th century, it is a tale which is as timely as it is timeless, for it reveals the lie upon which castles of sand are made. And despite their pretensions, these vainglorious structures

are unable to resist the tidal surge of hostile nature bringing with it the final verdict upon the sum total of our deeds and desires.

And standing atop the keep of his fortress abbey, like a dark specter against a chill sky of reddish hue, is Prince Prospero, Poe's supremely arrogant champion of falsehood. Thinking himself the O so sagacious and generous ruler, he invites a thousand lords and ladies to his stronghold where they are promised protection from that dread blight to which fully one half of his subjects had already fallen. Once within the safety of its lofty and mighty walls, the courtiers proceeded to weld shut all passages of entry or exit, and in so doing eliminate the threat of contagion. Chateau Prospero had become a great stone condom, and they who placed their faith in its impregnability were thus spared the ravages of that pernicious melancholy which had followed them to its iron gates.

"The external world could take care of itself. In the meantime it was folly to grieve, or to think. The prince had provided all the appliances of pleasure. There were buffoons, there were improvisatori, there were ballet-dancers, there were musicians, there was Beauty, there was wine. All these and security were within. Without was the Red Death."

For half a year, while the pestilence raged throughout the principality and all of Italy, the surviving members of the local gentry gorged themselves on the hospitality of their gracious benefactor whose very name (derived from the Latin meaning 'prosperous one') was proof enough of his capabilities. They were the care-free denizens of a truly imposing edifice, a monument to insatiable egotism and pride, yet at its core, its very heart and soul, was an imperial suite constructed in such a way as to symbolize the metaphysical essence of human existence. Poe describes it as consisting of seven rooms running from east to west, with each chamber characterized by a particular color by way of the ornaments and tapestries, and by virtue of stained glass windows through which fires burned from

tripods in the adjoining hallways.

The eastern-most room was hung in cool blue, as was the color of its illumination; the second room was purple in its decor, and here the panes were also purple. The third apartment was a lush green throughout; the fourth was all in orange, the fifth white, and the sixth violet. Each room shone with a festive life-affirming brilliance, but no such splendor was to be found in the black velvet and lurid red light of the chamber at the western extremity of this hidden and most secret place. And in the ghastly environs of that dark enigma which was the seventh room, there stood a gigantic ebony clock which chimed the hours with all the terrible certitude of a death knell.

It was in the first six rooms of the inner sanctum that Prospero entertained his guests with a masked ball to mark their sixth month of seclusion, and here would be achieved, through wild revelry in the midst of stunning opulence, that humanistic ideal of transcending brutal reality. It was one thing to overwhelm the mind and the senses with spectacular costumes, heady wine, and delirious music by which to dance one's self into oblivion, but for a fortress of the imagination



"And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him." – THE REVELATION OF SAINT JOHN THE DIVINE: Chapter 6, Verse 8



"...there was Beauty, there was wine. All these and security were within. Without was the Red Death." – Edgar Allan Poe's THE MASQUE OF THE RED DEATH

to be truly formidable it would be necessary to reinforce it with a physical facsimile of existential truth - hence Prospero's exacting specifications for the layout and design of his imperial suite. Poe was all too aware of the symbolism embodied in numbers, points of the compass, and the colors of the spectrum, and using this arcane knowledge he created the alternate reality by which his aristocratic protagonist would deceive and himself be deceived in spite of his vaunted wisdom and vision. How often have the purveyors of truth and knowledge fallen victim to that which they profess to know so well, like those diseased of the blood who would tell us what is safe and what is not, and yet who succumb to that unspoken collaboration between microbes and the libido.

The chambers in which the masque was held numbered seven, the numerological symbol of the universe, of completeness, and of totality. Its meaning is derived from the sum of the numbers three and four, with three representing the

heavens and the soul, and four symbolizing the earth and the body; and taken together they equal the entirety of God's creation. In Christian thought the number seven figures most prominently in the grand scheme of things, from the seventh day when God rested from his labors to the seven deadly sins to the seven seals of the Apocalypse by which the world is undone. The kings of ancient Egypt also employed the magic of this occult numerology, using it in the design of the pyramids which, as architectural interpretations of the number seven (consisting of a four-sided base and three-sided walls), were to provide the deceased rulers with all they would require in the afterlife. In fact, the largest of these royal tombs, the Great Pyramid, was considered one of the 'Seven Wonders' of the ancient world.

And like the pharaohs before him, Prince Prospero had built his own citadel against Death itself, never realizing that once sealed within its walls, there he would remain. Nor was he able to understand that his sorcery and his powers of the

will could never prevail against so great and terrible a plague. And as told in the Book of Exodus of the Old Testament, neither the dauntless Pharaoh nor his magicians were able to overcome the plague of blood which Moses called down upon Egypt for seven days. And yet, heedless of the fate which befell these willful ancients, the princely student of the black arts proceeded to arrange his seven chambers from east to west so as to chart the movement of the sun across the sky. Such a configuration would not only follow the cosmic cycle of dawn to dusk, but would also correspond to the life cycle of birth and death. In this way the abbey was established as a kind of universe in miniature, from which there was no escape, and whose inner sanctuary was cast in the likeness of man and the earth, with all creation contained within fortified walls beyond which lay a hostile void.

In this sense the color scheme of each apartment becomes a metaphor of anthropic and metaphysical actuality. There is the blue of the east room vibrant in its morning glory, trumpeting the advent of a new human life; while the blackness, tinged with red, of the frightful chamber in the west sings its praises to the goddess of the night and the Angel of Death. The colors of the chambers which lie between these two existential opposites represent the natural progression from childhood to old-age, where purple suggests the quickening of life, green symbolizes growth and fertility, orange signals the high noon of existence and the harvest, as white announces the approach of winter and the onset of wisdom, and violet speaks of the religious devotion and the shadow of death which come in the twilight of life.

And with the same purity of purpose with which Prospero developed the floor plans of his cloistered ball rooms, so he filled his holy of holies with the finest of fabrics, furnishings, and works of art; for it is in the nature of man to look to the works of his own hand for assurance for some sense of permanence to ward off the terrifying inevitability of his fragile mortal state. And as the king of Egypt sought refuge from Mosaic maledictions in the sanctuary of his stone gods, so do we now seek escape from the new Red Death in art galleries which pay homage to the almighty condom, some as high as six feet ("enclose me in thine rubber sheath"), others strewn across the floor so that we may walk in safety.

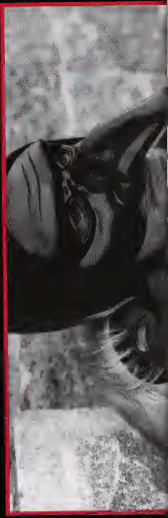
All ye Prosperos of times past and present. O bearers of "Truth," shield us with your deceit and your artfulness from the redness and the horror of blood and the unseen devils which lurk therein.

And the masque raged on. "There were delirious fancies such as madman fashions. There was much of the beautiful, much of the wanton, much of the bizarre, something of the terrible, and not a little of that which might have excited disgust."

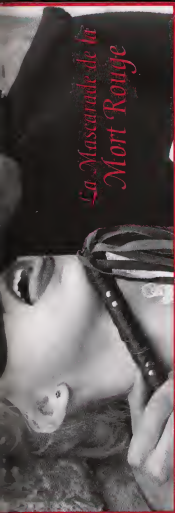
But there was nothing to impede the thoughtlessness of their gaiety, save for the stroke of each hour of that fateful day, sounded by the foreboding ebony clock in the black chamber at the west end. So mournful and penetrating were its chimes that the musicians were compelled to cease playing, as were the waltzers made to abstain from their wild gyrations, and all became quiet and still as if in deep or troubled thought. But as soon as the final echoes of the clock had died away, nervous laughter was heard to break out among the revelers, embarrassed by their folly and eager to put darker musings behind them. And once again all was well, and with reckless abandon the masque resumed with full vigor throughout the imperial suite, but never beyond the gloomy threshold of that mysterious seventh room where none but a handful of brave souls dared trespass, so frightful was the effect of the blood-red fire-light upon their faces. And as the festivities rose to fever pitch toward the stroke of midnight, it at last dawned on Prospero and his friends that there was a stranger in their midst, an uninvited guest, tall and gaunt and covered in a blood-stained funeral shroud. The infallible latex barrier which enveloped them was flawed, or perhaps it had slipped off or been torn as the case may be, or rejected entirely in the manner of those intoxicated by strong spirits and seduced by the romance of self-destruction.

"And now was acknowledged the presence of the Red Death. He had come like a thief in the night. And one by one dropped the revelers in the blood-bedewed halls to their revel, and died each in the despairing posture of his fall. And the life of the ebony clock went out with the last of the gay. And the flames of the tripods expired. And Darkness and Decay and the Red Death held illimitable dominion over all."

The shrouded and bloody deliverer arrives with startling, but not altogether unexpected, suddenness, and in describing this horrific epiphany of doom, Poe borrows from the scripture of I Thessalonians, Chapter 5: "the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For



*La Mascarade de la
Mort Rouge*



when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them...and they shall not escape." And that the poet should have seen fit to leave a legacy of Darkness in the wake of his tragic masque also recalls the dour sentiments of this Pauline epistle which assures the apostle's Thessalonian brethren that they are of the light, and not of the night and darkness, and that the thief shall not take them unawares. It is agreed then, by prophet and poet alike, that those who are, in the words of Poe, "utterly lost, to whom life and death are equally jests," should be taken to their rewards without so much as a knock upon the door; for what need is there to provide a decent interval to those who have not the sense to make good use of it, to make amends, to make one's peace, to prepare to meet one's maker. The implication being that pensive humility and submissive love before the cruel and august countenance of Providence itself are the only means to wrest one's being from the eternal clutches of the grave, where forever do wantons wallow in lovely shades of green amongst the maggots and the fungi of putrefaction.

It is at this point, when the soul has entered the blackness of the western sky, past the horizon and the fading light of dusk, and when decay has worked its wonderous magic upon the flesh, that visions from the great beyond are summoned up from the mists of mankind's collective unconscious. There is Anubis, the Egyptian jackal-headed god of the underworld and servant of Osiris, carrying a mummy in its coffin to the place of the dead in the western desert where he weighs the heart of every man against his sin upon the scale of justice. There is also the awesome spectacle of the Apocalypse, of seven mighty angels pouring out the seven last plagues upon the earth, and of corpses rising from hell and the sea to be judged with the living on the "day of the Lord," the Final Judgment, when the damned, Death, and the Devil are hurled into the eternal lake of fire. And then there is the lurid medieval imagery of the danse macabre, born of the greatest of all plagues, the Black Death, who in the guise of a robed skeleton leads his victims in a morbid dance amongst open graves as they sing, "Behold, see yourselves in us - dead, naked, rotting and stinking. So will you be who live without thinking. Power, honor, and riches are naught, for at hour of death only virtue is sought. In the art, theatre, and homilies dedicated to this catastrophic calamity of the fourteenth century, the final toll of which is unmatched in the annals

of human suffering, the message was always the same - that the righteous would be rewarded with new life and heavenly bliss, while those accursed would inherit the "grave-cerements and corpse-like mask" which were, in Poe's tale, the sum total of the Red Death's possessions.

With the mythological archetypes of death deities and deadly seraphim ready to rise at a moment's notice from the nether regions of the human psyche, it is little wonder that Prospero and his menagerie of dreamers were so deeply offended by the presence of the crimson stranger, in whose costume and bearing they could find "neither wit nor propriety." At the very least the intruder was sorely in need of tutoring in matters of sensitivity and social correctness; and at the very worst, for the truth does indeed hurt, he was the grim harvester of souls come to reap what human error had sown. Such is the task and endless wandering of 'Death the Leveller' before whom all, both peasant and prince, the worthy and the dishonored alike, must submit. It was a theme carried on the back of the flea-bitten and promiscuous black rat in his westward trek across Asia and Europe, bringing with him the Black Death which was to annihilate three-quarters of the population of both continents in the years 1339 to 1351 A.D.

Poe was profoundly influenced by that weebegotten decade of doom in which tens of millions perished, their bodies turned black with bloody discharges beneath the skin, hence the color by which the plague received its dread and terrible name. Although a fictitious affliction conceived in the author's tortured imaginings, the Red Death was likewise named after the color by which it announced itself upon the victim's flesh through an external discharge of blood from the pores, with death following in a matter of minutes. No disease known to pathology, not even one as virulent as the black plague, which killed in days if not hours, could ever match so outrageous a display of gore and violent dissolution, but such was Poe's fervent desire to shock and humble his readers with a visceral demonstration of the pain and transience of mortal existence. As much as he was enamored of the apocalyptic woodcuts and plague sermons of the Middle Ages, the poet's most immediate source of inspiration was a newspaper story which he read in June of 1832, ten years prior to the publication of his *Masque Of The Red Death*, which described a masked ball held in Paris at the height of a deadly cholera epidemic. Some two thousand

people were said to have attended the festivities, and most notable among them was a towering figure costumed as the Cholera itself, "with skeleton armor, bloodshot eyes, and other horrible appurtenances of a walking pestilence," around whom swirled a frenzy of gallows humor and nervous jubilation. Even in the shadow of such a chilling spectacle as this, gay Paris persisted in its gaiety with little or no hesitation; propriety was apparently not on the list of concerns that evening at the Theatre des Varietes.

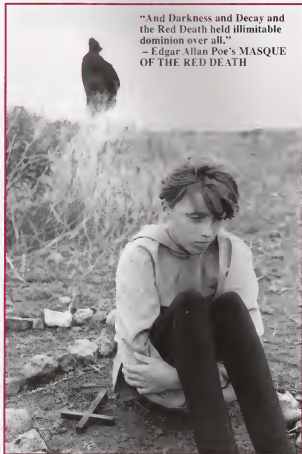
And yet it was all fear and loathing which greeted the corpse-like apparition upon its arrival at Prospero's castle, for such is the logical reaction of those filled to bursting with self-satisfaction and arrogant contempt for the forces of nature, only to see their fortress of illusion shattered in a brief moment, their dreams of invincibility torn to shreds and scattered to the winds. That the French revelers were able to welcome the personification of the Cholera with such glee owes entirely to the fatalistic acceptance of their own mortality, and to the appreciation of death's macabre eroticism with its promise of the beautiful young corpse - helpless and at the mercy of all creation. And as the cholera masque was one of sweet surrender, the masque of the Red Death was one of supreme denial, and though they differ from the standpoint of perspective, both are variations of the same theme, the age-old rite of those soon to die.

*Let the carnival of carnage begin,
all hail the Mardi Gras of the
murdered, 'Tis the dance of the
dead - the dream, the nightmare,
the awakening.*

This rite has resurfaced today in those circles most at risk of the new plague of the blood, the millennial terror of friends and lovers in passion's embrace. For as the poet refers to his thousand maskers as the "dreams" of Prospero's dark reverie, so too

are today's veiled and vivid creatures of the dance but mere phantoms of a grand illusion - the illusion of reckless action without consequence, of a love which conquers all, and of the infallibility of good intentions and that little rubber sheath we call salvation. And as the prince's guests stir as if out of slumber with the chiming of the ebony clock, so now do the sleepers stir with the ringing of church bells in mournful remembrance. And yet they awaken not, and as the last echoes of warning fade into forgetfulness, the fatal fantasy of the masque resumes, the plague parade marches on with all the fanfare and bluster of a Roman triumph. Trampled under foot

**"And Darkness and Decay and
the Red Death held illimitable
dominion over all."
- Edgar Allan Poe's MASQUE
OF THE RED DEATH**





from every orifice and pore, and in moments the dreamers fell lifeless to the stone floor. The path of the Pied Piper has led not to the Promised Land, but to a wilderness of loss and pain. And here naked lies fair Eros nestling in the black-clad bosom of Thanatos, the dark angel who came in answer to his yearning. Their tomb is the bed of love where desire has merged with death, and where the bones of the divine ephebe, once held so tenderly within the warmth of living flesh, are made bare and exposed to the cold ray of the moon. But Isis, the lunar goddess and protectress of love, weeps not for

"...and there was blood throughout all the land of Egypt." – THE BOOK OF EXODUS: Chapter 7, Verse 21

is the sorrow and the suffering, swept into the sewers is the loss of a generation of illuminati; the banners of victory are raised and a toast is made - 'to transgression, to the discovery of man's most secret depths, to kisses stolen from the very core of his being, and to the prophylactic guardian of all this earthly bliss.'

But the avenues of victory are also the avenues of contagion, and like the stricken populace of Prospero's blighted principality, fully one-half of the brotherhood have already been smitten by the 'pestis homoeroticus' (HIV). And for all the tragic courage and artful invention brought to bear upon this burgeoning disaster (e.g. the annual 'day without art,' the AIDS quilt, and ACT UP), nothing can silence the cries of young men dying nor stay the steady approach of midnight. Some call for 'safe sex,' as if mere slogans were somehow sufficient to prevent passion's inevitable entry into the realm of the scatological. There are those who plead the case of monogamy, of the 'life partner,' but for this it is already too late. And what of abstinence, the heavy chains of self-denial; to this question the answer is clear – it is better to have loved and died, than never to have loved at all. The boys of summer have entered into a suicide pact signed in blood, and until its terms are satisfied in full, let them sleep and dream of what might have been, only to awaken in the frozen fields of mortality's bitter harvest.

And when the ebony clock struck twelve, and the awful truth was upon them, blood issued forth

that love which kills, and it is the fate of the errant heart to be taken from the scale of justice and cast into the waiting jaws of that ravenous monster known to the ancient Egyptians as the 'devourer of hearts.'

And such was the sin of Pharaoh, who did so adore his blessed Egypt, that he allowed his heart to be hardened, and with stubborn resolve refused to yield to the God of Israel as the plague of the blood poisoned the waters, bringing disease and death to his countrymen. And even though the divine Pharaoh was believed to be above judgment, he may well have prayed that his breast be cleansed of 'love the destroyer' which is by willfulness and pride made deadly to the very object of its affection. In the **Egyptian Book of the Dead** there is a remedy for sin whereby the deceased adjures his own heart so that it will be as light as the 'feather of truth' against which it is weighed in the balance: "Set not thyself to bear witness against me; speak not against me in the presence of the judges, cast not thy weight against me before the Lord of the Scales." It is said, that only by such prayers can the heart be freed from the heavy burden of evil doings, and thus allow the dead man to be admitted to the company of the gods.

And in Dante's **Inferno**, pagan and Christian belief are combined to paint a vivid and harrowing picture of the dreadful fate which awaits those men who indulge in same-sex eroticism. For it is these "violent against nature" who are condemned to the 7th circle and 3rd round of Hell, where fire falls like white-hot snowflakes upon a great plain of burning sand, so that they who burned with forbidden desire should feel its infernal heat from above and below in never-

ending agony. But whereas the sodomites were made to run naked in endless circles upon the fiery desert, those "violent against God," the blasphemers, were stretched supine on the ground so that they suffered the greatest exposure to the blistering torment of their punishment. Prospero, the would-be god of his own making and master of the black arts, would surely, according to this Roman mythology of the damned, find himself so denuded, shamefully displayed, and ravaged in dark lands as fruitless as the belief in one's own divinity, and as barren as the act of anal copulation. Woe to Prospero, woe to Pharaoh, woe to Sodom, woe a thousand times over! And the Red Death takes them all at the height of their power and glory, at the acme of their vanity and arrogance, for such is pride's unhappy end. †

Right: "The Dance of Death" by Hans Holbein the Younger



"Sic transit gloria"

"Sic transit gloria" (so glorious a passage) – the Red Death has the final word at the end of his travels in Roger Corman's film adaptation of Poe's classic tale.

THE RITUAL

WRITTEN BY STEFANIE ARENTS

The chthonic Spirit, which is the heart and soul of Propaganda Magazine, so loved the children in black that to them was also given the flickering flame of Propaganda Video. And 'round the magic lantern with its sound and moving pictures they did gather, to warm their bones by night and to revel in its eldritch tales of love and death. Thusly did stark visions of witch burnings and Nazi war crimes dance before astonished eyes as the coital beat of **My Life With The Thrill Kill Kult** penetrated the soft inner flesh of the libido - such was the unforgettable experience of Video Volume 1.

And it was through the blood-stained lens of Volume 2 that the dour figure of the Vampire Lady, Countess Elisabeth Bathory, was seen feasting upon fair maidens in a **Foetus**-induced necro-erotic tango of death. And now, with the advent of Propaganda Video Volume 3, entitled **THE RITUAL**, the betrothal of Eros to Thanatos, the beauteous to the ghastly, begins anew. However, the lovers no longer find themselves in the darklands of The Inquisition or The Holocaust, or within the stone walls of a medieval Carpathian castle, but in ethereal realms of pagan myth and mysticism.

ANTINOUS: A CONCUBINE-CUM-GOD

Composed of three parts, the title feature opens with the true story of a Roman emperor's romance with a comely Grecian youth by whose name, Antinous, the 1st Act of the drama is known. It is a time of great tribulation, for the flood waters of the Nile have refused to rise and thus Egypt, the breadbasket of the Empire, is parched and barren. Famine casts its long shadow across the Mediterranean to Rome itself, and with the twin specter of civil unrest rising to threaten the imperial throne, the Emperor Hadrian is stricken with a grave and mysterious illness. Fearing that Caesar might not survive, Antinous consented to the urgings of palace priests and submitted to a sacrificial rite. It was the year 130 A.D. in the month of October during the Egyptian holidays commemorating the death of Osiris, lord of the underworld, in the murky depths of the Nile. And on the banks of that same river of dreams, the lovely young Greek was disemboweled with a ceremonial dagger. His was an offering to appease the river god who held back the life-giving waters, and to give Death his due - the lover in exchange for the beloved. Ailing and

PROPAGANDA VIDEO VOLUME 3

Diana the Huntress and Hebe, goddess of youth and Spring, make rebellious war against the mighty Apollo until all the world is in flames. Portraying the doomed lovers are Ursula Pezdek and Kimberly Westbrook in Act 2 of **THE RITUAL**.

Photos by Fred H. Berger

fearful, Hadrian then searched the boy's entrails for omens of the future, for such was his black superstition; and having satisfied his monstrous curiosity, he declared the slaughtered youth Osiris-Antinous and Savior of the World.

Grieving mightily, the Emperor created a cult of Olympian scale in honor of his bed companion, and surrounded himself with naked statues of the new deity. Yet, neither this, nor the founding of Antinopolis, that new and shining city erected upon the site of his darling's demise, could assuage the anguish of his bereavement. So great was the ardor of this maudlin devotion that when Jewish Zealots desecrated shrines and disrupted services dedicated to Antinous, the Emperor lashed out with unspeakable savagery against the Hebrew nation. In the ensuing holocaust of 132 to 135 A.D., a third of the Jews (no less than half a million souls) were annihilated, with the pathetic remnant forced into exile and slavery. Israel had ceased to exist, for such was Hadrian's ferocious love and megalomaniacal grief that he made of an entire people a burnt offering to a catamite god of his own design.

Although the genocidal outworkings of the Hadrian-Antinous affair are not here represented, the ritual slaughter, mourning, and apotheosis of the concubine-cum-god is powerfully acted-out in the dramatic settings of a Roman sculpture garden and a sacrificial altar. The exquisite imagery of antiquity and the elegance of the performers convey the very essence of the enigmatic relationship between the protagonists. And portraying the object of the Emperor's desire is Propaganda's devourable Coley O'Brien in loincloth and ecstasy as he awaits the fatal knife. His gaunt alabaster nakedness and submissive languor make him a paragon of martyrdom in the tradition of the arrow-pierced Saint Sebastian, the beautiful young Christian adopted by plague sufferers and male homosexuals as a patron saint.

In the role of Hadrian is Propaganda Video veteran Scott Crawford, whose brooding intensity is the very expression of the soul of the emperor, who is inconsolable despite his miraculous recovery, even as he bears witness to the salvation of the floods. For it was not the spilled blood of Antinous which offered true salvation, but the blood of another sacrificial god and Savior whose light was soon to flood the world. And thus deprived of his place in the sun, this supine pander of the Emperor's lust would become known to posterity as nothing more than 'the crown and glory of sculpture'—a god trapped in



John Koviak's theatrical portrayal in THE RITUAL is transcendent and mesmerizing.

stone. A wistful and timeless instrumental score provides a richly layered and haunting texture through which the scenes unfold. Composed by Scott Crawford, the sound-track elevates the imagery from the sentimental to the sublime and tells a tale of dark desire and mystery which no words can convey.

GODDESS: PASSION'S DEADLY FLAME

Following "Antinous" is Act 2 of THE RITUAL, entitled "Goddess." The homo-erotic Roman paganism of Act 1 continues, but in this case it is from the lesbian perspective represented in the portrayal of Diana, the goddess of the hunt, and Hebe, the goddess of youth and spring. As self-proclaimed champions of womankind, the lovers declare war against Apollo, accusing the sun-god of ravaging Mother Earth with drought and heat, wildfire and tempest. And flushed with righteous indignation the goddesses take up a golden bow and arrows, and climb the highest mountain peak from which to launch their attack

against the masculine oppressor. To them it is of no concern that it is upon him that all life depends, for why should the proud and strong woman suffer the hurt of his cruelty and the insult of his charity when the love of a true sister is all she really needs. And as the arrows strike in the midst of the solar orb, cataclysmic eruptions tear the heavens to burning shreds and set fire to their beloved Earth. In tender embrace Diana and Hebe observe the spreading flames, and although surrounded by the blaze they remain placid and defiant, unmoved by the mass destruction which they have wrought and indifferent to their own impending doom. For as the bed of their passion was an inferno, so too now is all the world.

'Tis a glorious misadventure, a rebellion destined to fail, and as the daring duo are engulfed in a swirl of smoke and ash, Apollo re-emerges in the form of the classical statue, a magnificent white marble ruin against a smoldering panorama scorched black by the flames of his anguish. The thrill of the lost cause, with all its fervent idealism, is captured in its full intensity by the musical score. Also composed by Scott Crawford, the piece features Valkyrie-like vocals accompanied by a rarefied instrumental track, and rising together to a lofty summit they plunge suddenly into the depths of oblivion. The composition is simultaneously moving and exhilarating, and in conjunction with the stunning visuals, it is sure to send the sisterhood into swooning paroxysms of giddy pride and wishful thinking.

SHAMBHALA: PURIFIED IN FIRE & BLOOD

Surely "Goddess" is a none-too-easy act to follow, and yet somehow the challenge is met and overcome with the 3rd Act of **THE RITUAL** entitled "Shambhala" - after the Tibetan city of legend where the spirit realm meets the material world. It was here in this mystical place that Buddha himself underwent initiation, and from whence the Secret Masters seek to resurrect the super-human race of Atlantis through meditation and visualization. The Atlanteans had perished in the Great Flood, but the symbol of their magical civilization, the swastika, survived to become the most universal of religious emblems, common to pagan cultures throughout history.

In "Shambhala" the Black Adepts of Tibetan Buddhism, represented by the mesmerizing John Koviak and masked dancers in ritual garb, meditate upon the Antediluvian Age of giants and god-men, and by means of the ancient art of swastika

mysticism call upon the daemonic to purify the world in fire and blood. The tantric Lord of Death and his mistress are summoned to unleash a reign of terror unknown in the annals of human suffering. And as the mystic contemplates the lama's ceremonial skull, the sun-wheels turn, naked corpses fill the streets, and a New Age of supermen threatens to become reality. And in a final spasm of destructive force, the great swastika upon the stone temple is shattered by a terrific explosion; and thusly are the Adepts cast headlong into the darkest reaches of the eternal Abyss. The baleful Sturm und Drang ambience of maestro Crawford's "Shambhala" composition meshes almost organically with the primal power of the images to achieve a work of artistic and spiritual transcendence.

Perdition by way of apotheosis - such is the course and consequence of **The Ritual**, of "the will to power." And such is the truth to which the willful are blind, be they emperor, goddess, or magus - victims all of vainglory and blasphemy. Shot in 16mm Black&White film, **THE RITUAL** effects a poignant synthesis of the morality play and Greek tragedy, and stands as a 15-minute testimonial on a disastrous tendency in human nature as perceived by writer/director Fred H. Berger.

CHILDREN OF THE NIGHT; WHAT MUSIC THEY MAKE!

And rising like phantoms out of the smoking ruins of this pagan mythos are the enchanted sounds and visions of the gothic groups **Rosetta Stone**, **Human Drama**, and **This Ascension**. It is by their pale and ghostly light that the darker corridors of human existence are explored and made known. To be sure, these bands are masters of the genre, but of particular interest is a lesser known group, **Deep Six**, whose video was filmed by Aime Elkins in the old German expressionist style. Part somnambulist and part nosferatu, frontman Gerhardt van Karnig is truly fascinating to behold. And with that, the last strains of the closing score fade into sweet nothingness.

VIDEO ORDERING INFORMATION

Propaganda Video Volume 3 was shot in Color and BW. It has a total running time of 45 minutes, and is available in VHS stereo format. For mail-order information see the **SANCTUARY MUSIC SALES** advertisement on page 37.



"THE RITUAL" (Propaganda Video #3) Brand New (\$14.95)
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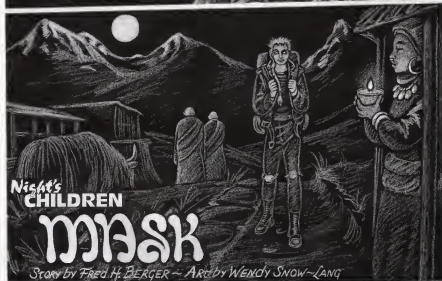
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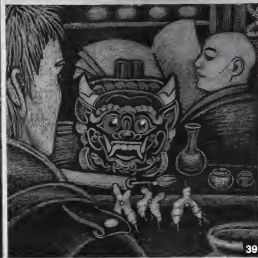
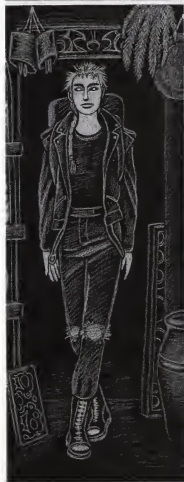
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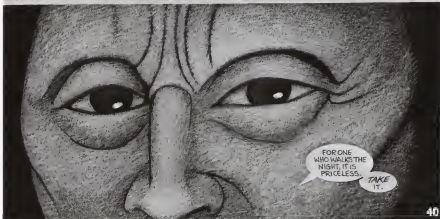
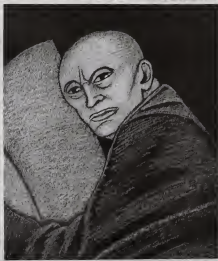
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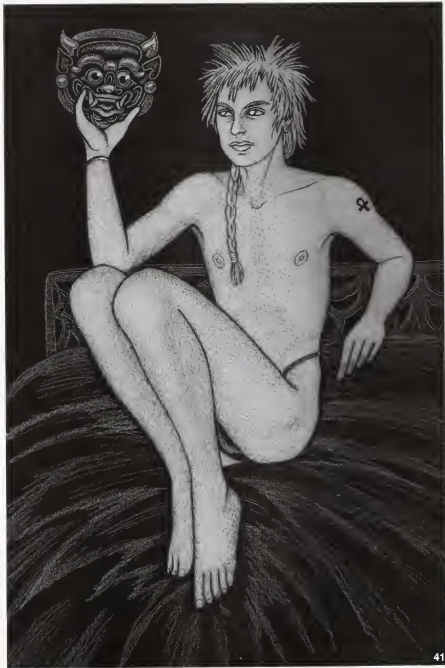
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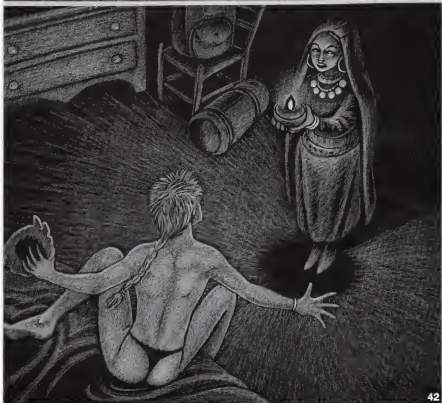
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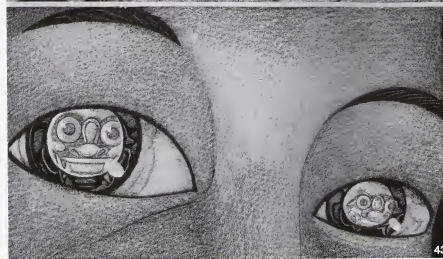
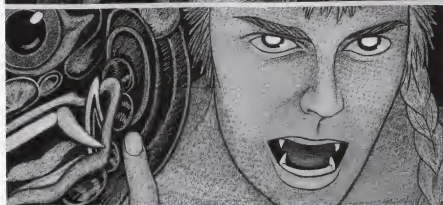
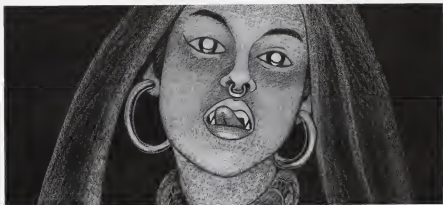












SKY CRIES MARY

What's in a name? Well, in the case of the band, Sky Cries Mary, everything. While on a trip to eastern Europe back in 1989, the band's lead vocalist and founding member, Roderick W. Romero, found himself on an overnight train ride through the haunting Carpathian mountains of northern Romania. With a Jimi Hendrix tape playing on his headset, he awoke to the blinding orange glow of a magnificent mountain sunrise.

"The concurrence of that incredible sky and the song, 'The Wind Cries Mary,' hit me like a diamond bullet," recalls Roderick. "I had already known before that time that I wanted to create music, but it took that defining moment to crystallize my ideas."

Thus, out of the merger of inspirational sight and sound, Sky Cries Mary was born. It is no mere coincidence that visuals are just as important to this band as is the music. Both are heady, psychedelic and mystical. Roderick refers to the band's live shows as "rituals." They are truly hippy-trippy experiences with lots of incense, fog, colors and projected images. Roderick and his co-vocalist (and wife) Anisa create a true sense of theater with their numerous costume changes on stage. The costume designs are outrageous and reflect the various moods they try to achieve with each song.

"We have a clothing designer named Danbury Stenderu back in Seattle who makes our costumes," says Anisa, decked out in her metallic-velvet frock. "What we wear adds to the atmosphere. It helps put you in a completely different mindset."

Anisa and Roderick came out of the Seattle Coffee House art scene where he was a theater major and she was a classically-trained vocalist and painter. Much of her artwork graces the covers of Sky Cries Mary releases. The latest one, a full length CD called *THIS TIMELESS TURNING* takes us further down that enchanted trail of dark, mystical meanderings. Like the band's previous domestic ops, *A RETURN TO THE INNER EXPERIENCE* ('93) and *EXIT AT THE AXIS* ('91), this new offering is an amalgam of styles reflecting the band's eclectic influences. Each one of the seven members has his or her distinct taste in music. The thread that connects them all, however, is their dedication to creating lush, sensual imagery through musical expression. At rock at its best. Indicative of the band's wondrous sense of psychotropic imagery is the fact that the original name for the new album was supposed to be *OBJECTS IN THE MIRRORS* (one of the song titles). The word mirror, itself, appears in the lyrics of several songs. Roderick explains this indulgence using his familiar allegoric references.

"Mirrors have always been a great metaphoric tool for writers. I used them in a reflective sense, to look back at myself. I also liked the way Cocteau used mirrors to enter different dimensions in his film 'Orphée.' That had a big impact on me." As will Sky Cries Mary on you. (No acid necessary.) **END**

INTERVIEW BY RENE WALZAK

Roderick and Anisa

Switchblade Symphony



STORY & PHOTO BY ERIC FISCHER

A symphony for the danse macabre. (l. to r.) Robin, Tina, Susan and Justin.

What if the Brothers Grimm had decided to set their gruesome little tales to music...what might it have sounded like? To find that answer, we have to look no further than San Francisco's startling up-and-coming quartet, Switchblade Symphony. They are burning up the Bay Area's club scene with their histrionic, theatrical live performances and powerfully chilling collection of songs. Truly unique in both concept and execution, this band's music has all the delirium and gothic horror of some demon possessed, antique musical-box.

Lead singer Tina Root and keyboardist extraordinaire Susan Wallace began experimenting with unconventional vocal and instrumental arrangements several years ago to "search for a unique musical niche, and channel their aggressive, creative energy." This aural experimentation ultimately culminated in a fascinating cassette release entitled FABLE. Both lyrically and musically, this group of songs constructed a fairy-tale-like world. Images of haunted doghouses and macabre, dancing marionettes were conjured through spooky melodies and enchanting lyrics.

Tina and Susan later invited drummer Justin Clayton and guitarist Robin Jacobs into the fold in order to give Switchblade

Symphony a fully, pure musical experience that keeping the haunting, refined quality of the earlier music. This resulted in a second release called ELEGY.

"We were hesitant at first to add more traditional elements like drums and guitar to our sound," says Susan. "We always saw ourselves as creating music that was totally unconventional. It was really one of our strengths. But, Robin and Justin proved otherwise. ELEGY is a definite progression in a positive direction for us, and the new material we just finished working on continues that progression."

The new material Susan refers to has a harder, more serious edge to it. And like always, the music Switchblade Symphony creates never fails to send chills up and down the listener's spine. A few of their tunes have even been chosen as soundtracks to underground art films such as the lesbian erotica flick, "Das Musik," and the surreal horror film, "Dark House." "We love doing soundtrack work," reveals Tina. "When I write lyrics, I'm always visualizing anyway. Music and imagery is a very natural partnership."

(For info, send a sase to: Switchblade Symphony, P.O. Box 170443, San Francisco, CA. 94117)

ROSETTA STONE

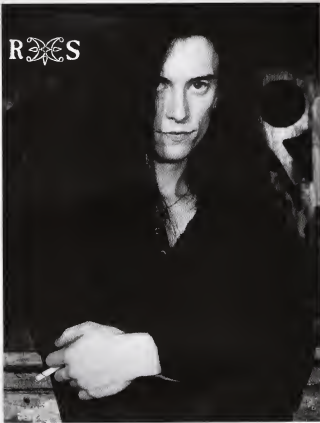
BY RENÉ W & BEN NORRIS

When we first wrote about Rosetta Stone over two years ago, much was made about the potential of this band. They were being touted as the next great gothic phenomenon. Lead singer Porl King was supposedly the heir apparent to the throne of the likes of **Andrew Eldritch** and **Peter Murphy**. Now that the smoke has cleared from the confirmation of the grand-scale gothic Procession Tour, those expectations have been fulfilled...almost. Not since the **Nephilim** did it in the late '80s, has a band in this genre made it to England's Top 40 Singles Chart. (Rosetta Stone did it with 'The Witch.') This past summer's U.S. Procession Tour, which along with headliner Rosetta Stone included several renowned gothic groups (like Germany's **Das Ich**, France's **Corpus Delicti**, and our own **Faith & the Muse**), was the largest drawing gothic tour ever. Legions of the undead came out in eleven cities across the country to see this lineup. For Rosetta Stone in particular, the expectations and anticipation reached near hysterical proportions.

"It was extremely daunting," recalls Porl King. "There was so much hype surrounding us, we were afraid we wouldn't be able to live up to it. Especially since there's only two of us up on stage. [Himself and bassist Karl North.] Our trepidation was compounded by the fact that we never played in the States before and had no idea of how the audiences there would react to us. But probably our biggest fear came from our decision to put emphasis on our new material—stuff that at the time hadn't been recorded yet, and thus completely unfamiliar to the people who attended those shows."

"Not only is this new material unfamiliar, but it bears little resemblance to the earlier music Rosetta Stone produced on such classic releases as 'An Eye For The Main Chance,' 'Darkness & Light,' 'Dead and Gone to Heaven' and 'Adrenalina.' Gone is the familiar **Sisters Of Mercy**-style doom n' gloom that got audiences here so lathered-up in a frenzy to see this band. The new style is more like **Nine Inch Nails**, and has a much nastier edge. Though it's very appealing in its own right, it's very different as well...and many fans were taken aback by such an unexpected development. We must admit, it came without warning."

"To be honest," says Porl quietly, "I noticed quite a few disappointed looks from people who were hoping to hear all the old songs they were so familiar with—that's just human nature. I can understand that. But you also have to see it from our perspective. We hadn't played live for two years before the Procession Tour—and in that time, our musical tastes underwent a gradual transformation. We grew tired of the old formulas. Karl and I had been doing that stuff for almost ten years, and we just weren't enjoying writing that way anymore. I mean, we grew up with the **Sisters/Mission/Bauhaus** sound, and we loved it. We've never denied our gothic roots, but bands who don't grow tend to stagnate and become self-parodies. That's what



Rosetta Stone's Porl King, the crown prince of darkness.

we would've become if we made the new album sound like 'Adrenaline' all over again. The new stuff is very similar to the previous material in attitude and intent—it's just that our production techniques and instrumentation have changed. Most of the fans, I think, did appreciate what we were trying to do and got into it. The New York and Chicago shows were fantastic. I think there's more of an industrial root in the music of those cities. To tell you the truth, I would've had an even greater fear of sounding outdated had we decided on a playlist of mostly older material."

"I would like to think of Rosetta Stone as having both gothic and industrial influences now. It allows for so much more experimentation with our sound. We want to do something totally unique after so many years of being very derivative. Karl and I are listening to a lot of **Cop Shoot Cop**, **Toei**, **Nine Inch Nails**—that type of stuff now, and it shows in our writing. We've definitely grown as writers."

Just recently, Porl and Karl put the finishing touches on the recording of the new CD (to be released on Cleopatra). The power and the glory of their revamped sound will blow you away—that's a guarantee. The working title for the album is **THE GOD'S DOLL**, which is the title of one of the songs. Although Porl says it may change to



From England, Port and Karl have come to conquer America's gothic underground.

FRIENDS AND EXECUTIONERS, which is also a song title.

"I'm very happy with how it turned out," says Port of the new release. "I'm particularly satisfied with the lyrics. We don't write them in a strictly poetic sense anymore, the way we used to. I used to choose words that just sounded good together. As I mature as a writer, it becomes increasingly important to me that I give meaning to each verse. I want our music to mean something, and I think this CD accomplishes that."

"Musically, there is that harder, more direct edge to our sound now. Anyone who saw us on the Procession Tour knows that. I hesitate to say we have an outright industrial style, because that implies the tedious soundscapes of *Skinny Puppy* and *Front 242* type bands, who can drone on for ten minutes with one song and get very repetitious. One thing has always remained the same for us — our preference for shorter, more melodic pieces. We'd like to avoid becoming an album-oriented band. I want each song to be strong enough to stand on its own."

Though musically, Rosetta Stone has made a significant transformation, visually they remain true to their dark, gothic roots. The live show is still jam-packed with eerie lighting, dry ice and Port's infamous Prince of Darkness presence and stare.

On an intellectual level, the band has also remained steeped in its dark & mysterious origins. The name Rosetta Stone comes from the ancient stone tablet that was discovered by archaeologists in 1789. On it was inscribed a code key to translate ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs into Greek and Latin. It was probably the greatest archaeological find ever. Port and Karl believe deeply in the mysteries it uncovers, as well as their new sound.

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o sunshine BLIND o



Few have the insight and vision of Caroline Blind.

Never before has one 6-song cassette tape created such a commotion and gotten so much mileage as the one put out by the stupendous goth band Sunshine Blind.

Though this group has been struggling to secure a record deal with several labels, it has been their now legendary cassette and live shows that have sustained them. With such spine-chilling songs as 'Child,' 'Neon' and 'Francis,' it's no wonder there is so much interest in this New Jersey band.

Fronted by the sleek woman-in-black, vocalist Caroline Blind, the band has wowed audiences all over the U.S. This attracted the attention of the highly regarded Scream Records, who recently signed them, and a much awaited CD is due out shortly. It's entitled LOVE THE SKY TO DEATH.

"It's so good to finally be releasing something new to go along with that cassette," says Caroline. "The cassette did really well, and it helped build a name for the band, but it's high time we got our new material out there. We've been playing much of it live already anyway. Most of the CD has been recorded, and I'm very pleased with how it turned out. Figure it'll be released in about a month or two."

In the meantime, Caroline, guitarist C.W.H.K., and bassist Al are burning up the club circuit with their thunderous, sinister brand of doom rock. They've opened for such gothic legends as Sex Gang Children and Dave Vanian of The Damned. The success of the band must in part be credited to Ms. Blind's lyrical prowess, as well as C.W.H.K.'s ingenious music writing.

"My lyrics are very personal and complex," explains Caroline. "I'm very much into the psychology of relationships, and I use my lyrics as sort of monologues to express those ideas. I'm also into some east-

ern philosophies — and they enter into my writing as well."

ARTICLE BY PAUL HART

Sunshine Blind puts out an informative newsletter that keeps their fans up to date with the band's activities. If you're interested in their much talked about cassette and getting on their mailing list, please send a s.a.s.e. to:

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Mephisto Walz



The story begins nearly ten years ago in a dark, smoky L.A. club called Fetish. Two mysterious, raven-haired men dressed in all black sit in an unfit corner discussing their futures and the future of the L.A. music scene. Their names are Rozz Williams and Bari-Bari. As the leader of the legendary, death-rock cult band Christian Death, Rozz has just tapped Bari to join his morose crew of musicians as the band's new bass player. Christian Death is thus set to tour for their infamous ASHES LP, that has Rozz doing vocals along with Gitane Damone, Valor on guitars and David Glass on drums. The rest, as they say, is history.

Ironically, Rozz would leave the band less than a year later. Bari-Bari and the others would bravely press on, even without the band's guiding focal point. Club impresario Johann Schumann joined as the new bassist and Bari moved to guitar, with Valor moving to vocals. BELIEVERS OF THE UNPURE and ATROCITIES were this line-up's crowning achievements. Shortly thereafter, Bari and Johann left to form Mephisto Walz, and thus another legend was born. With the help of such underground luminaries as James McGearty (of the original Christian Death) and Rob Graves (of 45 Grave), Mephisto Walz created some amazing music. THE ETERNAL DEEP LP, released last year, contains a nice selection of songs from the '87-'92 period of European import releases. (It encompasses such classic Eps and Lps as MEPHISTO WALZ, CHOCOSMIA, AS APOSTLES FORGET and TANGIA. With the addition of vocalist-keyboardist Christianna, the band was set to invade the states. They've just released the TERRA THALIA LP on Cleopatra Records. Bari-Bari

admits that his writing style still has a little of the old Christian Death flavor to it.

"True, some people see a bit of Christian Death influence in Mephisto Walz," says Bari. "And why shouldn't they? My style of writing and playing was something I had even before joining Christian Death. It's not gonna suddenly disappear now."

On the new LP, TERRA THALIA, there is a song called "Facade (Closet of Faces)," which epitomizes Bari's lyrical and instrumental styles. The mood is both atmospheric and sensual, and Christianna's vocals are positively unearthly.

"Because of mass frustrations / Emotions hid in chains / How no forever can be measured / Eventually it just has to fade / Yet as a hunger beckons me / In fear I heed the call / A desire comes to me / Arresting touch as I recoil..."

"If you examine the lyrics," explains Bari-Bari, "they are very much on the dark side of things, but they're not true. I'm not gonna write about graveyards and vampires or something as obvious as that. Those things get really old really quickly. I prefer more abstract stuff, to set moods. It's almost a subconscious thing because it's less contrived that way."

Mephisto Walz are now poised to sweep America. They already have large followings all over Europe. They lived in Germany for a while, where they toured with Rozz Williams and Shadow Project a couple of times. Will the two mysterious men in black once again meet to discuss the future of the scene? Stay tuned!

ARTICLE BY ZAHRA



David Glass, Bari-Bari and Christianna make Mephisto Walz an intriguing musical outfit.

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